

Annual Report of Accomplishments and Outcomes, July 2010 – June 2011

New Mexico Department of Health, Epidemiology and Response Division,

New Mexico Occupational Health Surveillance Program

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Program type: Fundamental Surveillance

The overall goal of the New Mexico Occupational Health Surveillance Program (NMOHSP) is to conduct occupational illness and injury surveillance and data analysis in order to identify opportunities for intervention and to communicate surveillance findings to those that can affect positive change for workers by:

- Collecting and analyzing occupational health indicator data, monitoring existing datasets and case reports, and by conducting limited, focused surveillance where gaps exist.
- Building and maintaining partnerships with groups who can affect change for worker populations.
- Disseminating occupational illness and injury data to health care providers, public and occupational health and safety professionals, and to workers and employers.
- Engaging with partners at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) and in other states to accomplish the goals of occupational health surveillance.
- Evaluating and continuously improving the NMOHSP through the assessment of existing databases used for surveillance, the delineation of objectives and approaches for enhancing the program, and the development of measures to demonstrate progress.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTPUTS

Report on *Mycobacterium avium* Complex in Spa Workers

Two cases of lab-confirmed *Mycobacterium avium* Complex (MAC) infection were reported to the NMOHSP in February 2010. The two cases worked for the same employer, a spa with several outdoor tubs. The symptoms, exposures, and presence of MAC in the two workers were indicative of hot tub lung, a hypersensitivity pneumonitis (HP). The cases of MAC in the two workers were found to be associated with spray cleaning of dirty spa cartridge filters. Extensive collaboration with other state and federal agencies resulted in primary work practice recommendations, prevention recommendations, as well as lessons learned about interagency communication in response to occupational health issues. A poster on the investigation was shown at the CSTE National Conference in June, 2011 and was nominated for the "Outstanding Poster" award in occupational health. Additionally, a presentation of the investigation was made to the NM chapter of the American Society of Safety Engineers Professional Development Conference in May, 2011.

Changes to Notifiable Occupational Health Conditions

A systematic review of occupational health diseases and conditions reportable under the New Mexico Health Code was conducted. This included the compilation and review of reportable

conditions from other states and consultations with partners at the state OSHA, Chronic Disease Bureau and NMOHSP strategic planning advisory members. Occupational heavy metals poisoning (removed for redundancy with environmental notifiable conditions) and chronic beryllium lung disease (no cases reported) were removed from the list. Three injury conditions, traumatic fatalities, amputations and hospitalization for burns, were added to the list. The list is still under review and will be open for public comment in the coming months. It is anticipated that changes to the reporting list will provide data to help target workplace injury hazards.

Collection of industry and occupation data questions on the NM-BRFSS, 2011

The NMOHSP has used the BRFSS asthma call-back survey for several years to monitor estimates of the NM prevalence of occupational asthma. To better understand the occupational factors behind the responses, we proposed to include questions on the NM-BRFSS state-added module for 2011. The questions were in the form of a pick-list for both industry and occupation (I/O), as was required by the Survey Unit. The NMOHSP epidemiologist conducted trainings and follow-up for interviewers on I/O collection concepts and will assure that coding of I/O responses is conducted with the assistance of NIOSH Division of Surveillance, Hazard Evaluations and Field Studies.

Meetings with state OSHA to strengthen partnership

The PI, Environmental Health Epidemiology Bureau Chief, and program staff met several times, individually and collectively, with the Bureau Chief, Compliance Manager and other staff of the New Mexico Occupational Health and Safety Bureau to discuss how to strengthen their partnership. The results of the strengthened partnership has been worksite referrals, including several elevated blood lead cases at a shooting range, discussions of how to conduct surveillance of health care workers to target prevention efforts in alignment with NMOHSB's Local Emphasis Program in healthcare, and revisiting of the memorandum of agreement between NMOHSP and NMOHSB.

Strategic planning meetings with stakeholders

In August 2010, the NMOHSP held its first meeting with stakeholders to devise a strategic plan for occupational health surveillance for New Mexico. Subsequent meetings were held in October 2010, February 2011 and June 2011. The planning process has brought together partners from across the state including occupational medicine physicians, workers compensation, regulatory agencies, and industry and worker groups. A final strategic plan for OH surveillance will provide a blue print for effective communications and information dissemination with OH partners across the state.

Outreach to Bureau of Indian Affairs workers

NMOHSP staff participated in a health fair for workers at the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs offices in May, 2011. The Health and Safety fair was held at the Southwest Regional office in Albuquerque and had exhibitors from health care organizations, state, tribal and local public health programs and various health and safety consultants. There were an estimated 75 -100 employee participants, the majority of whom were Native American. The NMOHSP provided information on lead and other heavy metals, occupational asthma and pesticide exposure prevention, among other topics. Organizers requested that the NMOHSP return next year.

Reporting to the NMOH Registry increases

The NMOHR has received a several-fold increase in reports within the last year (less than a dozen in 2009 vs. 312 in 2010). Several meetings were conducted with health care providers including Concentra Occupational Medicine, Med Works of Santa Fe and asthma and allergy specialists in Albuquerque. In December, the NMOHSP presented to the Occupational Medicine

group at Sandia National Laboratories to present on the notifiable conditions requirements. Additionally, Dr. Kesler coordinated a presentation to UNM Hospital providers and reporting from the UNM occupational health clinic. The occupational health educator (OHE) followed up with monthly reminder calls and emails to clinics, which initially coaxed reports, however, the reports have tapered off in recent months. Recently, the OHE has left her position which poses a challenge for these labor-intensive monthly reminders.

Outcomes: Increased collaboration with regulatory agencies, strengthened relations with partners who participate in strategic planning, enhanced visibility with worker groups, such as BIA employees and professional organizations, such as ASSE.

Plans:

Improve reporting of occupational conditions from providers, clinics, emergency departments and hospitals.

Submission of a proposal for the inclusion of I/O questions on the 2012 NMBRFSS.

Revise and update the MOA between NMOHSP and NMOHSB.

Finalize the strategic plan to collect and disseminate OH surveillance data to enhance prevention efforts.

Analyze workers' compensation data for selected conditions.

Place reports on three occupational health indicators on the State of New Mexico's, Department of Health, Indicator Based Information System for Public Health (NM-IBIS)

<http://ibis.health.state.nm.us/>.